

**CHARLIE BAKER**  
*Governor*



**KARYN POLITO**  
*Lt. Governor*

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**Baker-Polito Administration, Worcester Law Enforcement Announce  
Treatment And Diversion Partnership Pilot For Low Level Substance  
Misuse Offenses**

**WORCESTER**— The Baker-Polito Administration and Executive Office of Public Safety today announced an award of \$99,000 and a new partnership with the City of Worcester Police Department and the Worcester County District Attorney's Office to pilot an innovative new approach to tackle the heroin and opioid epidemic plaguing Massachusetts cities and towns. The "Buyer Diversion Treatment Alternative" (BDTA) program is designed to divert lower level offenders arrested for purchasing narcotics from a dealer under law enforcement surveillance away from the criminal justice system and into treatment and recovery options.

"Since taking office, we have increased prevention, treatment and recovery programming for the families and communities facing this epidemic, as well as local law enforcement officials responsible for their safety," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "Learning from this pilot with our colleagues in Worcester, we can further support individuals struggling with substance misuse by diverting them into programs that reduce the barriers to conquering addiction."

"The tragic, human toll of the opioid crisis challenges us all to develop new and innovative ways to approach law enforcement and substance misuse issues," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "Offering those suffering from addiction an alternative path

to treatment and recovery will we hope deliver individuals a chance to change their own lives as the criminal justice system focuses on more serious crimes in our communities.”

The award enables the WPD to hire a case manager with expertise in substance abuse counseling to serve as a liaison between law enforcement and the treatment centers where individuals will be referred for care. The grant will also support a WPD coordinator who will work with the District Attorney’s to administer the program.

“Each day they’re on patrol, police officers see firsthand the destruction wrought by the opioid crisis,” **said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Dan Bennett.** “This program is unique because it gives the police a mechanism to redirect drug buyers toward treatment so that they can break the cycle of addiction.”

Eligibility for the BDTA program will be based on individuals meeting certain criteria as determined by the Worcester District Attorney’s Office and the Worcester Police Department (WPD).

“I am pleased to be partnering with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Worcester Police and the Baker-Polito Administration’s Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to find a new and innovative way to address the opioid epidemic,” **said Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.** “This initiative will aid our ongoing efforts to help those suffering from the disease of addiction get into treatment, while at the same time allowing police to continue to work to arrest the dealers who are bringing the poison into our communities.”

“We’ve heard law enforcement officials say many times that we can’t arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic. Incarcerating people who suffer from addiction isn’t going to work,” **said City Manager Edward M. Augustus, Jr.** “I’m proud of the work being done by the Worcester Police Department to support treatment for those that need it. Thank you to Gov. Baker’s administration and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security for recognizing this crucial problem across the Commonwealth, and taking real steps to help communities solve it.”

“I am grateful to the Baker-Polito Administration and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security for this funding that will help us get to the root of the problem by providing treatment and support services for people who are struggling to overcome addictions rather than funnel them into the criminal justice system,” **said Worcester Police Chief Steven M. Sargent.** “We are proud of our strong partnership with the Worcester County District Attorney’s Office and we look forward to working in collaboration to try to turn the tide of this epidemic. Together we can save lives from drug overdoses, reduce the number of individuals suffering from drug addiction and

improve public safety.”

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